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XIV.—A HITHERTO UNNOTICED MIDDLE ENGLISH MANUSCRIPT OF THE SEVEN SAGES.

In the very exhaustive and thorough account of the Middle English versions of the *Seven Sages* by Dr. Killis Campbell, which appeared in these *Publications*, XIV, pp. 37 f., I see that the Bodleian ms. has escaped notice. As I believe that no one has hitherto called attention to this version, it may be worth while to give a brief account of it here. I came across it some years ago whilst working through a number of the Rawlinson MSS. in the Bodleian Library. The ms. in question bears the press mark *MS. Rawl. Poet.* 175 (New Catalogue 14667) and is a parchment ms. of the middle of the 14th century, *The Seven Sages* occupying fol. 109–131^b. This Rawlinson version is in the Northern dialect and agrees very closely indeed with ms. *C* (Cotton Galba E. ix); in fact in the portions which I have examined, these two MSS. agree almost word for word, as the following specimen and collations show. To give some idea of the ms. I here append (1) ll. 1–128¹ in full, (2) the readings from the Rawlinson ms. which differ from ms. *C* in the *Avis* story,² and (3) the readings from the Rawl. ms. which differ from ms. *C* in the last portion of the whole (ll. 3913–4002).³ Contractions are denoted by italics.

¹ The *C* version of these lines is printed in Weber, *Metrical Romances*, III, 3–8.

² The *C* version of this story will be found printed in full by Petras, *Ueber die mittenglischen Fassungen der Sage von den sieben weisen Meistern*, Breslau, 1885, p. 56. In printing the variants I disregard mere differences of spelling.

³ The *C* version of this last portion is in Weber, III, p. 149.

I.

HERE BEGYNȝ þe PROCESS OF þe fol. 109.
SEUEN SAGES.

Lordynges þat here lykes to dwell,
Leues yhour spech *and* heres þis spell.
I sall yhow tell, if I haue tome,
Of þe seuen sages of Rome.
Whilom lyfed a noble mane,
His name was Diocliciane;
Of Rome *and* of all þe honoure
Was he lord *and* emperoure.
Ane Emperise he had to wyfe,
þe fairest lady þat bare lyfe;
Of all gud maners full auenant,
And hir name was dame Milisant.
A child þai had bitwix þam two,
þe fairest þat on fote myght go,
A knaue child þat was þam dere;
Of him sone sall yhe selcouthes here.
Sone afterward bifell þis case,
þe lady dyed *and* grauen wase,
And went whare god hir dyght to dwell;
þarfor of hir no more I tell,
Whether scho past to pyne or play,
Bot of þe son I sall yhow say.
When he was seuen wynter ald,
Of spech *and* bourdyng was he bald;
Florentyne his name cald was.
Herkens now a ferly case.

His fader was Emperour of Rome,
A noble man *and* wise of dome,
And florentyne þat was so fayre,
Was his son *and* als his ayre.
It was no thing þat he lufed mare,

parfor he wold him sett to lare ;
 And sone he gert bifor him come
 Seuen maisters þat war in Rome.
 þe tale vs telles who to it tentes
 þat þai couth all þe seuen scientes.
 And sone, when þai war efter sent,
 Hastily to þe court þai went.
 þai come bifor þe Emperoure,
 And hailed him *with* gret honoure
 He said, ‘ lordynges, takes entent,
 And sese whi I efter yhow sent,
 For yhe er wysest men of lare,
 þat in þis world yhit euer ware.
 My son I will yhe haue forþi,
 To mak him conand in clergy ;
 And I will þat yhe teche him euen
 þe sotelte of science seuen ;
 And all yhour wisdom *and* yhour wytt,
 Mi will es þat yhe teche him itt.
 Whilk of yhow now will him haue,
 And fullfyll þis þat I craue ? ’

Maister Bancillas spak þan,
 For of þam was he oldest man ;
 Lene he was *and* allso lang,
 And mast gentyll man þam omang ;
 Full perfyte he couth his partes,
 And sadly of all þe seuen artes.
 ‘ Sir,’ he sayd, ‘ tak me þi son,
 Full mykell thank I will þe kon,
 And trewly I sall teche him þan
 Of clergy more þan any man.
 þat dar I vndertak þe here
Within þe space of seuen yhere.’
 When þis was sayd, he held his pese ;
 And þan said maister Anxilles,
 (He was a man metelyest,

And of eld als him semed best,
 Of sixty wynter *and* no mare,
 And als he was full wise of lare):
 ‘Sir, tak me þi son,’ he said,
 ‘And þou sall hald þe full wele payd;
 I sall him lere full ryght *and* rathe,
 þat I kan and my felows bathe.
 I vndertak he sall it lere
 Within þe space of sex yhere.’
 þe thred maister was lytell man,
 Faire of chere *and* whyte als swan;
 His hare was white *and* nothing broune,
 And he hight maister Lentilioune.
 He spak vnto þe Emperoure,
 ‘Tak me þi son, sir, *paramoure*,
 And I sall teche him full trewly
 All maner of clergy
 þat any man leres in þis lyue,
 Within þe terme of yheres fyue.’
 (fol. 109^b) [þe]¹ ferth maister a red man was,
 And his name was Malquidras;
 Of fyfty wynter was he ald,
 Quaynt of hand *and* of spech bald.
 Him thoght skorn *and* gret hething,
 þat þai made swa gret rosyng.
 ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘I sall tell þe,
 Mi felows witt falles noght to me;
 Ne of þair wisdom, on none wyse,
 Will I mak no *marchandyse*.
 Bot, sir, þi son vnto me take,
 And I sall teche him for þi sake,
 þe science of Astronomy,
 þat falles to þe sternes of þe sky,
 And other sex science allswa,

¹ þe is no longer there.

In foure yhere *withouten* ma.'
 þe fyft maister was wise of dome,
 And he was cald Caton of rome;
 He made þe buke of Caton clere,
 þat es bigynyng of Gramere.
 He carped loud vnto þe kyng,
 'Sir, tak þi son to my techyng,
 I wald noght he desayued ware,
 Bot I ne knaw noght my felows lare.
 Bot for to lere him I warand,
 Als mykell als he may vnderstand,
 And als his wyttes wele may bere'¹
 Forthermare dar I noght say,
 So þat in tyme of seuen yhere
 He sall be wise *withouten* were.'
 þe sext maister rayse vp onane,
 þe fairest man of þam ilkane
 Iesse was his name, godote,
Withouten faut fro heued to fote,
 His hare was blayk *and* nothing broune;
With eghen faire als a fawkoune.
 'Sir,' he said, 'if þi will were,
 Tak þi son to me at lere.
 I sall him teche *with* hert fre,
 So þat *within* yheres thre,
 Sall he be so wise of lare,
 þat yhe sall thank me euermare.'

II.²VARIANT READINGS OF THE *AVIS* STORY.MS. Rawlinson fol. 122.^b

2420 ³	It hanged] And it hynged
2455	And thar] þare

¹So the ms.²Cp. Petras, p. 56.³The numbering of the lines is that of Petras.

- 2462 leuyng] leuenyng
 2465 cache] kage
 2474 ester] efter
 2477 and night] þe nyght
 2478 shoke] hir schoke
 2479-80 þat scho had neuer so euell rest
 Sen scho come out of hir nest.
 2492 leuenings] leuenyng
 2513 was] war
 2515 to knaw] we knaw
 2516 of hy] o sky
 2520 lok] toke
 2525 the ledder] þat ledder
 2526 He had] And had
 2533 was gude] well gud
 2534 his wife] þe wife
 2538 his soth] hir soth
 2547 moght] mot.

III.¹

- 3915 *With reuerence and with gret honoure.*
 3927 bren] brent
 3933 he sayd] he had sayd
 3935 efter] men efter
 3939 soth] als soth
 3957 gandes] gaudes²
 3963 al the gilt] þe gylt
 3973 Sir] sirs.

¹ Cp. Weber, III, p. 149.

² These variants from the printed texts exceed in number the real variants from the mss. According to Dr. Killis Campbell's copies and collations of the mss. the variants noticed by Professor Napier in 2420, 2455, 2462, 2474, 2478, 2479-80, 2492, 2515, 2516, 2520, 2525, 2534, and 2538 are to be attributed to the faults of Petras's text of the *Avis*; and Weber's text is to be held accountable for the variants 3927, 3939, and 3957. This note is added with the kind permission of Professor Napier.—J. W. B.